May 3, 2002 Meeting Notes

Advisory Committee for Facilitating Data Sharing

Attendees:

Steve Schafer, Chair	CIO – DAS	slschafe@notes.state.ne.us
Gayle Starr	Nebr. Dept. of Natural Resources	gstarr@dnr.state.ne.us
Tom Lamberson	Nebr. Dept. of Envir. Quality	Tom.Lamberson@ndeq.state.ne.us
Mark Kuzila	Cons. and Survey Div.-UNL	mkuzila1@unl.edu
Dan Hiller	Nebr. Emer. Mgmt. Agency	dan.hiller@nema.state.ne.us
Jason L. Berlowitz	Nebr. Emer. Mgmt. Agency	jason.berlowitz@nema.state.ne.us
Dave Hattan	IMServices – DAS	dhattan@notes.state.ne.us
Tracy Bicknell-Holmes	UNL – Library Services	tbicknel@unlnotes.unl.edu
John Miyoshi	Lower Platte North NRD	jmiyoshi@lpnnrd.org
Mike Thompson	Nebr. Dept. of Natural Resources	mthompson@dnr.state.ne.us
Dick Genrich	Nebr. Dept. of Roads	dgenrich@dor.state.ne.us
Marcus Tooze	GIS Workshop	mtooze@gisworkshop.com
Chris Stanton	GIS Workshop	cstanton@gisworkshop.co
Larry Zink	GIS Steering Committee	lzink@notes.state.ne.us

Review of Minutes of the Previous Meeting. The meeting opened with a review of the notes from the last meeting. Particular attention and discussion was given to discussing Tom Lamberson's suggestions for grouping/revising the potential roles for a Nebraska Data Access and Support Center that were originally offered by the Internet Mapping Advisory Committee in their resolution recommending the development of a Nebraska Data Access and Support Center. There was a general comfort expressed with the grouping or categorization offered by Tom for the various potential roles.

Revised Spatial Data Survey. Larry presented a revision of the spatial data survey based on the discussion at the previous meeting. The revised survey was simpler and asked fewer questions. There was a discussion about the merits of leaving in the question of what other data needs an agency might need, but it was decided to leave the question in. There was general approval of the revised survey.

Short Term Objectives to Enhance Nebraska spatial data clearinghouse. Steve and Larry had developed a draft agenda around potential short and long-term objectives. The short-term objectives focused on things that might be done to enhance the current Nebraska spatial data clearinghouse, within available resources. Steve indicated that he was looking for areas of consensus around how these objectives might be realized.

A. Combine existing catalogues/clearinghouses: Steve proposed for discussion that NDNR take the lead in developing and being the official host a general Nebraska spatial data clearinghouse, with the initial listings being those currently listed in the NDNR Databank clearinghouse and the more general listings in the Nebraska Geospatial Data Clearinghouse hosted by Nebraska Online. Additional listings from other agencies would be added as they are identified and properly documented with metadata. The goal would be to provide a single point of contact for searching for and accessing Nebraska-related spatial data. Some data may be hosted on NDNR servers and access to other data will provided by access information, or hyperlinks to other servers, embedded within the metadata. The clearinghouse site will be compatible with other FGDC Clearinghouse nodes.

B. Identify other currently existing spatial data holdings: Steve inquired as to the ability and willingness of the UNL Libraries to take the lead in identifying and documenting existing spatial data holdings. Tracy indicated that this was something that the libraries were interested in, as they had a number of requests from students. She felt fairly confident, that given the time to work it into the workflow, they could develop an online tool to conduct the spatial data survey. She indicated they would probably need

help with whom they should contact. Larry indicated that he could help with contact information an potentially making the initial contact with many agencies. The group discussed what should be the initial focus of a spatial data survey. It was decided that the initial focus should be on state agencies, institutions of higher education, and NRDs. While it was a stated desired to be able to search for and access Nebraska-related data from federal agencies, if possible, this would be pursued through linked clearinghouse nodes. The Nebraska I-Team was suggested as a forum for pursuing these links. While there was an interest in local spatial data, but it was decided that the available resources probably did not allow for this focus, at least initially. It was agreed that the UNL Libraries, will support from Larry, would take the lead in conducting the spatial data survey.

C. Document other currently existing spatial data holdings: Tracy indicated that the UNL Libraries would also have an interest, and some expertise, in helping to document existing spatial data identified, but currently without metadata. However, she indicated that both their technical expertise in this area and their resources were limited. Marcus Tooze provided the group with an outline of what all was involved in metadata documentation. There was general recognition that the follow-up of the survey and working with agencies to develop the needed metadata could potentially be a very resource-demanding task. Mark Kuzila indicated that CSD could potentially help some with both technical expertise and resources. There was a discussion of the possibility of developing an online template for metadata creation. It was also noted that some of these templates have been developed by other states and that much of the newer GIS software has embedded metadata development tools. It was generally agreed that the UNL Libraries would take the lead in working with agencies to develop missing metadata, with support from CSD, subject in scope to available resources. Larry indicated that he would willing to work with the Library to prioritize metadata development efforts.

D. Catalogue newly documented spatial data in combined clearinghouse: It was generally agreed that the newly documented spatial data would be catalogued in the combined spatial data clearinghouse hosted by NDNR, subject to their available resources.

E. Identifying the mix of resources necessary and available to achieve short-term objectives: In the discussion of resources, Tom Lamberson raised the question about the possibility of using some of the homeland security funding to support this cataloging effort. He indicated that he felt it was certainly appropriate. Dan Hiller indicated that there was a considerable amount of funding available and that the Governor had the final say. Dan suggested that the GIS Steering Committee pursue this funding. Tracy indicated that some staffing changes at the Library also might help with some resources for this effort.

E(a). Help desk: It was noted that one of the potential roles that had been identified was that of a help desk and this in many ways feel between the short-term objectives for an enhanced clearinghouse and the longer-term vision of a data support center. It was agreed that this function can require a considerable amount of resources. In the short-term, it was recognized that many of these inquires will fall to NDNR, as the clearinghouse host. To minimize this drain on resources, it was suggested that efforts should be made to refer as many questions as possible to the data owners, to publish a topical web of contacts/referral lists, and to resist becoming an ad hoc training center.

F. Clarify relationship between combined clearinghouse with Nebraska GIS Steering Committee: Steve proposed a conceptual model whereby the Steering Committee would be the ultimate owner of the clearinghouse and NDNR would be the trustee charged with operational responsibility for the clearinghouse, subject to available resources. Under this concept, the group agreed that when insufficient resources were available, the Steering Committee had a primary responsibility to take the lead in pursuing the additional resources needed. There appeared to general support within the group for this concept.

Building a Nebraska spatial data access and support center ¾ defining a longer-term vision / solution. Only limited discussion was possible on this longer-term vision / solution because most of the available time was taken up in addressing the short-term objectives.

Mark K. started the discussion by raising the question of how we get beyond these short-term, patchwork solutions to achieving official recognition of the importance of a data center function. A broader discussion followed. Among the suggestions offered were encouraging state agencies to raise this need in their budget submissions for the next biennium. It was also suggested that the importance of this data center to homeland security should be made to the policy makers.

A. What is the range of services we wish to plan for and build towards? Tom L. stated his views that he did support such a center providing technical assistance/consulting services, he didn't feel it should be doing data development or programming. The question was raised about the possibilities of agencies pooling some of their resources and farm out some of their application development work as one way of helping to hire some needed staff for a data center. Tom indicated that he felt that there were a range of consulting/technical assistance type services that such a center could fill for both state and local agencies.

Marcus Tooze noted that from his experience it is difficult to get agencies to farm out GIS functions due to concerns about accountability.

Mike Thompson indicated that he felt that there were some unique niches that such a data center could fill for a number of agencies. He mentioned Internet mapping capabilities as one that should be considered. Mike noted that this particular functionality requires unique technical skills and hardware and software that are not currently available through many agency GIS analysts. Internet hosting and security/authentication were other areas involving somewhat unique capabilities that were mentioned.

Larry noted that it was important to consider not just the likely needed of the current GIS user agencies, but also those small and new user that might develop their GIS capability and applications in harmony with the existence of a data center.

B. Over a period of time, what resources (broadly defined) can/will supporting agencies provide to help support the development and work of such a center?

C. What organizational structure would best facilitate the on-going pooling of those resources, achieve the optimum synergy of supporting partner agencies, and provide the desired range of services? It was suggested that following the example of other states and developing and organizational structure that could combine the strengths of state agencies and the universities should be pursued. Specifically mentioned as potential university strengths were available expertise, student labor, lower software costs, and the ability to quickly expand and contract staffing. It was also mentioned that strengths that IMServices might bring to such an effort were the ability to have consultants on retainer and/or pre-qualified consultants, as well as internet hosting and security/authentication.

D. What should be the relationship of such a center to the Nebraska GIS Steering Committee, the NITC?

E. Which agency/agencies are interested in potentially hosting or sponsoring such a center?

F. What medium-range objectives or steps can be defined and taken to facilitate the development of such a center?

Given the lateness of the hour, the meeting was adjourned with a commitment to meet again on Wednesday, May 29th, 1:30 PM in the NDNR conference room to continue the discussion.

Potential role(s) of a Nebraska spatial data access and support center:

Tom L's suggestions	Interactive Internet Mapping Adv. Cmte. Resolution Suggested Services
Catalog +	a. Maintain a central geospatial clearinghouse with catalog search engines to identify the wide range of Nebraska-related geospatial data that is currently available, standardized documentation on the specific databases, and information on how the data might be accessed. b. Maintain a central repository and online access point for a broad cross-section of Nebraska-related geospatial databases, either by direct download, links through interactive Internet map server technology, or a variety of offline digital transfer media. c. Provide users with a single contact point to obtain the most recent versions of a variety of dynamic geospatial databases and the agencies responsible for maintaining these dynamic geospatial databases with a single point of contact with these data users.
Help Desk	d. Provide users with a single contact point to obtain the most recent versions of a variety of dynamic geospatial databases and the agencies responsible for maintaining these dynamic geospatial databases with a single point of contact with these data users.
Internet Mapping	e. Provide agencies wishing to develop and maintain their own internal Internet mapping capabilities with a convenient one-stop online interactive access point for widely-used (particularly large and/or dynamic) data files, to allow them to access these files through their internet map services, without requiring them to maintain separate copies of these large and/or dynamic files on their internal agency servers. f. Provide a variety of state and local agencies with capability of distributing information using interactive Internet mapping service technologies without the necessity of acquiring the specialized hardware and software, and developing and maintaining the specialized technical expertise. g. ~~Offer the potential of a one-stop GIS portal for accessing state data via Internet mapping services~~. (Suggested rewording: Provide technical expertise and special services to state and local agencies desiring applications with a GIS interface)
Technical Assistance	h. Assist a variety of agencies to explore the potential of, and develop and maintain a range of interactive Internet mapping applications in support of their agency missions by providing a convenient and knowledge service center. i. Provide state and local public agencies with outreach and education related to GIS implementation j. Serve as a GIS consultant (suggested addition by Tom L.)
Suggested additional service to be listed	k. Spatial data development